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ABSTRACT

To explore the issue of prejudice against male participation in child care professions, a study was conducted with 13 female students in the process of completing 2-year associate degrees in child care. Subjects responded to a projective measure on which they were asked to inspect a list of nine personal "deficiencies" and rate, on a seven-point Likert scale, how important each might be in negatively judging child care workers of both sexes. Subjects were randomly assigned to a male/female or a female/male sequence of consideration. The nine deficiencies included laziness, low intelligence, emotional instability, homosexuality, fear of competition, lack of social skills, physical weakness, inability to do other types of work, and dependent personality. Results of statistical analyses indicated prospective teachers were significantly more concerned about emotional stability than about fear of competition. Strong individual differences in how subjects viewed child care workers were found. On two of the deficiencies, homosexuality and laziness, subjects indicated that there would be greater concern about male than female child care workers. It was concluded that results support the view that males in child care face prejudices from coworkers--prejudices similar to those encountered by males employed in other traditionally female-dominated occupations. (RH)

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ICABOD CRANE IN DAY CARE II: TEACHERS' CONCERNS ABOUT MALE CAREGIVERS

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Presented at the annual meeting of the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association, Snowbird, Utah, April, 1983.

Running head: Male Caregivers

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Icabod Crane in Day Care II: Teachers' Concerns about Male Caregivers

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There have been numerous calls for more male involvement in the care and education of young children (Burtt, 1965; Kyselka, 1966; Peltier, 1968; Vario, 1969; Johnston, 1970; Williams, 1970; Kendall, 1972; Sciarra, 1972; Milgram & Sciarra, 1974; Greenburg, 1977; Robinson & Canaday, 1977; Robinson, 1980). However, surveys of male child care workers show that their turnover rate is extremely high (Robinson, 1980). Those who do chose to remain in the field most often move out of direct daily contact with children into administrative roles. Previous studies indicate that the reasons for this turnover and migration are numerous. For example, child care offers men: low pay, low status, and a prejudicial judgment of incompetence from day care consumers (Robinson 1980; Hesselbart, 1977; Gordon & Draper, 1982; Note 1). There is additional evidence that men who work with children in a nurturing capacity may experience some self-doubts about their own potency, masculinity, and instrumental achievement effectiveness. These self-doubts have been described elsewhere as the "male fear of nurturing" (Note 2) and are similar in nature and effect to the "fear of success" observed in some females (Feather & Simon, 1975; Horner, 1972).

Male child care workers have also complained that they experience some free-floating negative bias from female co-workers (Johnston, 1970), though no empirical evidence of this has been collected. Hesselbart (1977) noted that males who went into nursing tended to be regarded as either work-ethic deviators (lazy) or sex role deviators (homosexual) by many of their female colleagues. The present study sought to determine if there was a similar prejudice against males in the child care professions.

METHOD

Thirteen female child care students who were just completing their two-year associate degrees in child care at a county technical institute in the Southeastern United States served as subjects. A standard projective technique was used to obtain information about the students' views. The subjects were told:

> In some research, both men and women working in day care have been rated poorly in certain attributes. The reasons people give these ratings to day care workers are not well understood. We would appreciated your using your judgments to help us determine some of the concerns people may have about day care workers when they give them negative ratings.

On the next two pages, please check how important you feel concerns about each of the listed attributes might have been in influencing the judgments people made.

There is no need to write your name at the top of the paper. Opinions are anonymous and participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate simply refrain from completing the questionnaire and return it blank. There is no penalty for not participating, though your answers together with those of other people will be helpful in understanding certain aspects of human behavior.

The subjects then turned the page and read:

If the day care worker was a <u>woman</u>, (<u>man</u>, for half the subjects) how important do you think concerns about the following attributes would be in determining the low ratings that she (he for half the subjects) received?

The subjects were then asked to look at a list of nine different "deficiencies" and rate how important each might be in regard to people's negative judgments about child care workers of the specified sex on a seven point Likert scale. Following this the subjects rated child care workers of the opposite sex on the nine deficiencies. The order of consideration was counterbalanced. The subjects were randomly assigned tooeither the male-female or the female-male sequence of consideration. The nine deficiencies were: laziness, low intelligence, emotional instability, homosexuality, fear of competition, lack of social skills, physical weakness, inability to do other types of work, and dependent personality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The overall concerns of teachers about the nine deficiencies are shown in Table 1. A 2 (type of deficiency: repeated measure) by 2 (subject) analysis of variance was conducted on the ratings given by the teachers. There was a difference in the means reported in Table 1, $F = 4.46$; $df = 8, 96$; $p < .05$. A Duncan Multiple Range Test was used to compare the differences between the several means. This comparison showed that there was more concern about emotional instability than there was about fear of competition ($p < .05$). No other comparisons were statistically significant ($p > .10$). An examination of the main effect for subjects revealed that there were differences in the overall level of concern different teachers expressed about deficiencies in child care workers, $F = 2.57$; $df = 12, 96$; $p < .05$. Basically, there were strong individual differences in how the prospective teachers viewed child care workers. Some subjects expressed a high level of concern, others expressed a lower level of concern. As recommended by Keppel (1973), the deficiency by subject interaction was used as the error term to test the two main effects in this within subjects design.

Insert Table 1 about here

The subjects ratings for male and female child care workers were compared using one tailed t-tests. Sex of child care worker

being rated served as the independent variable and ratings on each of the nine deficiencies served as dependent variables. On two of the deficiencies, homosexuality (t = 1.90, df = 12, $p < .05$, one-tailed) and laziness (t = 1.85, df = 12, $p < .05$, one-tailed), the subjects indicated that their would be greater concern with male than female child care workers. There were no statistically significant differences on the other seven deficiencies ($p > .25$). The two deficiencies where a statistically significant difference was observed are portrayed in Figures 1 and 2.

Insert Figures 1 and 2 about here

The results show that these prospective teachers are well aware of some of the stigma that has traditionally been placed on both male and female child care workers. The results are also supportive of the view that males in child care may face some of the same prejudices from co-workers that have been encountered by males who have sought employment in other traditionally female dominated occupations. These conclusions are limited to some degree by the small sample size and by the projective technique used to draw the inferences. Use of this projective technique requires the assumption that the subjects revealed something of their own beliefs when they were asked to give information about why others have given child care workers low ratings. Conclusions based solely on such techniques remain controversial, but since the results are precisely in accordance with other studies of males in traditionally female dominated occupations they do not seem unwarranted. Studies of other samples in other areas of the country would be helpful in ascertaining the degree to which the present observations can be generalized.

Assuming that the data do portray an accurate picture of reality, they provide one more bit of evidence about why it may be difficult to attract and keep men as child care and education professionals in capacities that involve working directly with young children. Males who work with young children seemingly face an uphill battle. With their female colleagues they must content with general stigma, low pay, and low prestige. Alleviating the problems of low pay and low prestige that are associated with the care and education of young children will require organized political action by all of those professionals who are concerned with the welfare of young children. Successful political action will be complex, controversial, and expensive. However, insofar as the exclusively male problems are concerned, it may be relatively easy to reduce some of the prejudicial and internal factors that contribute to male dissatisfaction within the child care and education profession. While deeply rooted prejudices and self-doubts are not easily eliminated, it is highly possible that some gains could be made by the adoption of standard con-

sciousness raising and attitude change techniques. Discussions with day care workers, child care consumers, and potential male recruits might alleviate some of the problems by bringing them into the open where those sincerely interested in solving them could could take remedial action.

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TABLE 1
TEACHERS' PROJECTED CONCERNS ABOUT DEFICIENCIES IN CHILD CARE WORKERS (N=13)

Deficiency	Average Importance of Concern
Laziness	5.65
Low Inttlligence	5.81
Emotional Instability	6.35
Homosexuality	4.73
Fear of Competition	3.81
Lack of Social Skills	5.54
Physical Weakness	4.38
Inability to Do Other Types of Work	4.23
Dependent Personality	5.54

1 = Very Unimportant, 7 = Very Important

FIGURE I. CONCERNS ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY OF CHILD CARE WORKERS

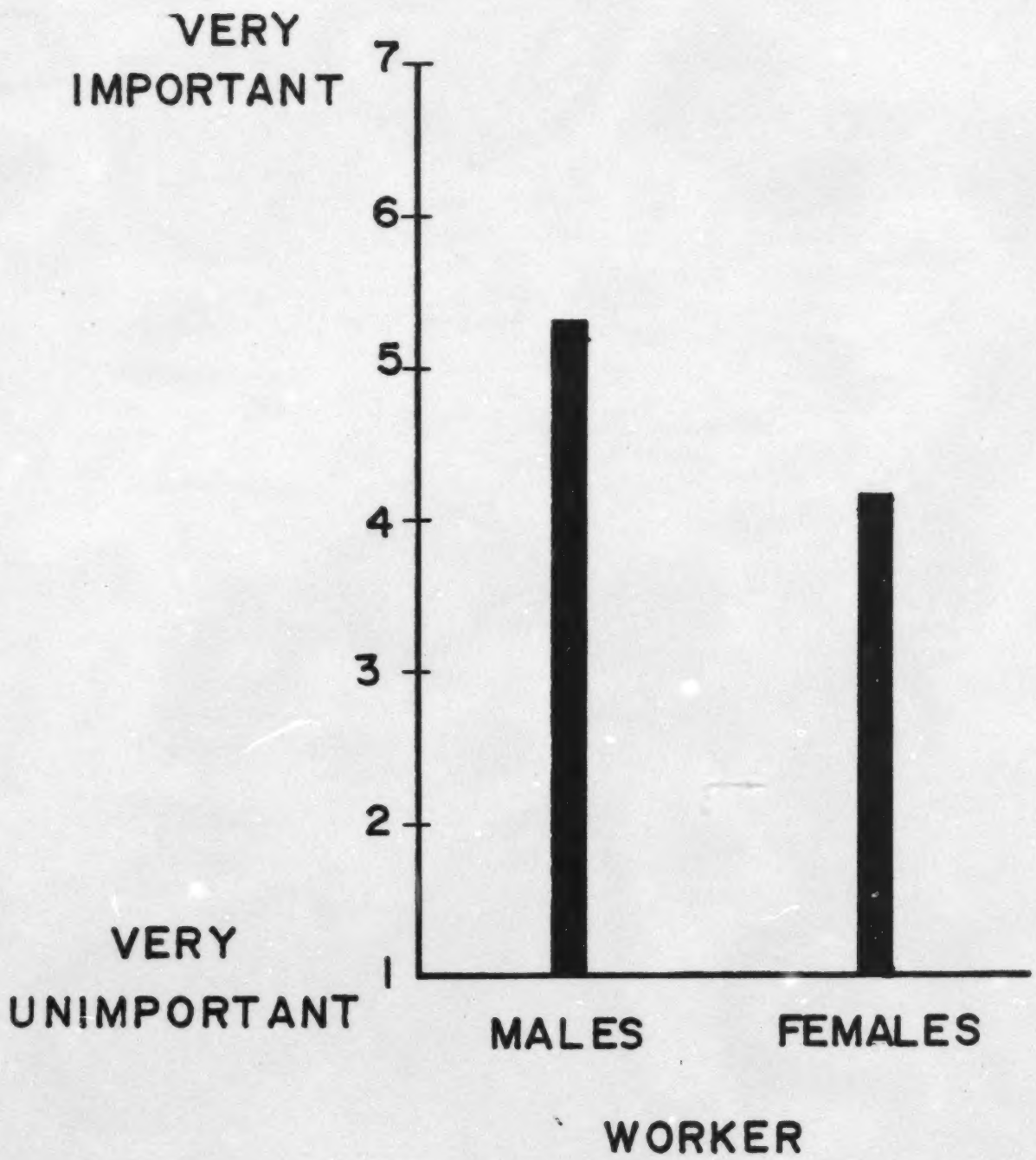

FIGURE 2. CONCERNS ABOUT LAZINESS OF CHILD CARE WORKERS